

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JOHANN 01822 181518Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00

EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 DHA-02 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00

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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6388

INFO AMEMBASS LONDON

AMEMBASY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SF, PINR

SUBJECT: WIEHAHN ADDRESS ON THE REGULATION OF LABOR RELATIONS IN A
CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

REF: JOHANNESBURG 1797, JOHANNESBURG A-81

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PROFESSOR WIEHAHN DELIVERED AN ADDRESS AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA DESCRIBING HIS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
REMOVING DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR RELATIONS. IF
IMPLEMENTED, WIEHAHN'S SUGGESTED CHANGES COULD RESULT IN PLANT
BASED AND COMPANY DOMINATED UNIONS (A MULTI-RACIAL APPLICATION
OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE SYSTEM) WITH GREATER GOVERNMENTAL
CONTROL OF LABOR RELATIONS IN GENERAL. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS INAUGURAL LECTURE AS EXTRAORDINARY PROFESSOR AT THE
INSTITUTE OF LABOR RELATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA,
PROFESSOR NICHOLAS E. WIEHAHN EMPHASIZED THAT LABOR MATTERS
SHOULD IN HIS OPINION RECEIVE URGENT ATTENTION. HE SAID THE
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PAGE 02 JOHANN 01822 181518Z

FIRST OF THESE HAD TO BE AN INVESTIGATION INTO
DISCRIMINATORY MEASURES IN LEGISLATION WITH ITS TWO RESULTS
DUALISM AND PATERNALISM.

3. STRESSING THAT THE OPINIONS HE WAS OFFERING WERE HIS ALONE
AND IN NO WAY COMMITTED THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO LABOR
LEGISLATION WHICH HE HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO CHAIR, WIEHAHN LISTED
SOUTH AFRICA'S LABOR PRIORITIES AS:

A) ONE LABOR SYSTEM WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION OR PATERNALISM;

B) STATE AND EMPLOYER RECOGNITION OF TRADE UNIONS FOR ALL WORKERS AND A GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED NATIONAL PROGRAM TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN TRADE UNIONISM;

C) RESEARCH IN LABOR RELATIONS WHICH SHOULD BE EXPANDED AND COORDINATED TO PREVENT DUPLICATION;

D) THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONFLICT-HANDLING SYSTEM WITH EMPHASIS ON CONTROL OR REGULATION RATHER THAN CONCILIATION.

4. WIEHAHN ALSO STATED WHAT HE CALLED SIX BASIC RIGHTS FOR ALL WORKERS: "THESE HAVE THE SAME CHARACTER AS INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS -- THE RIGHT TO WORK, TO ASSOCIATE, TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY WITH THE EMPLOYER, TO WITHHOLD LABOR, TO TRAINING AND TO PROTECTION."

5. AN AUTHORITATIVE COMMENTATOR ON SOUTH AFRICA RADIO, WHO FREQUENTLY DESCRIBES THE GOVERNMENT POSITION, COMPARED THE WIEHAHN ADDRESS TO THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED EEC LABOR PRACTICES CODE (JOHANNESBURG 1796). HE SAID THE EEC POSITION, WHICH IS TO APPROACH OF THE UNITED STATES. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ACCORDING TO THE RADIO COMMENTATOR IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE EEC.

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PAGE 03 JOHANN 01822 181518Z

6. IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE REGIONAL LABOR OFFICE WIEHAHN SAID HE WAS SENSITIVE TO THE WIDESPREAD CRITICISM THAT A BLACK TRADE UNION LEADER SUCH AS LUCY MVUBELO (VICE PRESIDENT OF THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA) WAS NOT APPOINTED TO THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY. HE INTENDS TO TAKE THIS MATTER UP WITH THE MINISTER.

7. COMMENT: WIEHAHN'S REMARKS WERE OBVIOUSLY CAREFULLY PHRASED. SEEN FROM A POSITIVE LIGHT THEY WOULD APPEAR TO SUPPORT CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S DUALISTIC SYSTEM OF LABOR RELATIONS. REALISTICALLY THAT CHANGE IS LIKELY TO BE IN THE DIRECTION OF MUCH TIGHTER GOVERNMENT LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WHICH SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE WOULD BE DESIGNED TO KEEP WHITE MANAGEMENT IN CONTROL AND DIVIDE THE BARGAINING POWER OF BLACK WORKERS.

8. FYI: THE FULL TEXT OF THE WIEHAHN ADDRESS IS BEING POUCHED SEPARATELY.
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Message Attributes

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